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A brief report of some preliminary findings obtained from a sociolinguistics census of Chicano college students attending a university in Southwest Texas is presented. Findings reported deal with: (1) general patterns of language usage as reported by students, and (2) the students' evaluative responses to code-switching phrases controlled for syntactical constraints. In general, findings appear to support the notion that syntactic constraints do operate on code-switching; thus suggesting the existence of a code-switching grammar. (Author)

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Acceptability Judgements of Code-Switching Phrases By Chicanos: Some Preliminary Findings **

Adalberto Aguirre, Jr.
Sociology Department
Stanford University

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ABSTRACT

A brief report of some preliminary findings obtained from a sociolinguistic census of Chicano college students attending a university in Southwest Texas is presented. Findings reported deal with (1) general patterns of language usage as reported by students, and (2) the students' evaluative responses to code-switching phrases controlled for syntactical constraints. In general, findings appear to support the notion that syntactic constraints do operate on code-switching; thus suggesting the existence of a code-switching grammar.

Acceptability Judgements of Code-Switching Phrases
by Chicanos: Some Preliminary Findings **

Introduction

In his studies of New Mexican Spanish, Espinosa (1909,1911,1917), considered code-switching to be an important factor in the introduction of English words to Spanish. He termed this phenomenon "speech mixture", and considered it to be a random intermingling of Spanish and English words and phrases; and an urban rather than a rural phenomenon. For instance, some examples of the speech mixture Espinosa (1917:412) describes are the following:

¡qué ice-cream tan fine!
¡qué fine ice-cream!
¡qué hombre tan sporty!
Well, boys, vámonos!

Thus, Espinosa (1917:412) writes:"The kind of speech mixture which brings into the Spanish of New Mexico the use of regular English words and phrases has no fixed limits and cannot follow regular laws."

Lance (1969), on the other hand, in a study of language usage by Chicanos in Texas demonstrates that code-switching is not entirely random, but rather is due to the "word or phrase that is most available at the moment" (p.69). He contends that because the speakers he interviewed knew the appropriate words in both languages, switching did not occur simply because the speaker did not know a particular word in one language or the other. In addition, he suggests, as do Cardenas (1970) and Lawton (1975), that because switching may occur in a variety of linguistic environments (eg. in compound structures, between major syntactic elements, within major syntactic groups), there appear to be

no syntactic restrictions on where switching may occur.

However, Gumperz & Hernandez (1970) and Sanchez (1974) do find in their analyses of Chicano code-switching that certain syntactic constraints do operate on switching. For instance: adverbial constructions may be switched,"Vamos next week," but not as interrogatives,"When vamos?,"; a switch may occur at a noun phrase but only after a determiner,"Se lo di a mi grandfather," but not,"Se lo di a my grandfather,"; an adverb may be switched before an adjective,"Es muy friendly," but not "Es very amistoso."

In addition, Gumperz & Hernandez (1970) set some restrictions on what types of language mixing may be considered as code-switching. For instance: (a) expressions, usually as exclamations and sentence connectors, serving as "identity markers" are not instances of code-switching; for example,

(1) Andale pues. And do come again. Mm?

(2) Si, but it doesn't.

(3) I says Lupe no hombre don't believe that.

Expressions such as these are considered by Gumperz & Hernandez (1970:113) to be "frequently used by speakers who no longer have effective control of both languages."

(b) Loan-word nouns are also excluded from being classified as code-switching. For example:

(4) He's a chicano.

(5) Son gabachos.

In brief, Gumperz & Hernandez caution against regarding all instances of Spanish words in the text as instances of code-switching.

Our Purpose

The notion of syntactic constraints within code-switching suggested by Gumperz & Hernandez (1970) and Sanchez (1974) has not been seriously investigated. As a result, the extent of these constraints is not known. To this end, the present paper pursues the notion of syntactic constraints on code-switching by presenting some preliminary findings regarding the acceptability judgements of a select group of Chicano speakers to a series of code-switching phrases containing pre-defined syntactic constraints. The findings are tentative, awaiting further linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis. However, they are presented as preliminary evidence for the presence, and recognition by speakers, of a code-switching grammar.

Method

Gumperz & Hernandez (1970) and Sanchez (1974) obtained their data by recording natural conversations between themselves and informants. From these tapes they were able to extrapolate those phrases that appeared to contain certain unique grammatical constructions, assumed to be the result of some syntactic constraint operating within the phrase. However, there is a problem with this procedure: the researcher, by not allowing subjects to respond to these extrapolated phrases, is not able to assume that both he and the subject are giving the same meaning to the phrase. That is, do they both share the same understanding of the underlying syntactical constraint? Does the subject see it as a syntactical constraint? How does he interpret it (i.e. as an awkward element in the phrase)? Thus, the researcher is not able to determine, nor to make any general statements about, whether a general body of knowledge exists among the members of the speech community concerning acceptable

or non-acceptable forms of code-switching.

The technique used in this study is a relatively simple one. Taking off from where the previous approach ends, a series of code-switching phrases was taperecorded and presented to subjects paid to participate in the study. The recorded phrases were selected, though not all, from examples provided by Lance (1969), Sanchez (1974), and Gumperz & Hernandez (1970). Following Lance (1969), the primary criterion for considering these phrases to be examples of code-switching, and thus preventing them from being regarded as forms of borrowing, is that for example in "Me duele este finger," each component in the phrase retains its own phonology, morphology, and syntax. To simplify analysis, switches within phrases were limited to no more than two.

A total of 120 syntactic constraints (SC) were examined. However, only four of the (SC)'s examined in the study are presented in this paper. These are listed below. (See appendix A for phrases examined within each (SC) category.)

SC_1: a switch before the relative pronoun "que" is more acceptable than one after it.

SC_2: a switch between the article and noun.

SC_3: possessives are generally not switched to agree with the (language of the) noun.

SC_4: adjectives are generally switched and placed in a post-English-noun position.

Note, a switch as used in this study, means that the elements involved (i.e. noun, article, etc.), will each be in either English or Spanish. By a switch we do not mean that the elements involved exchange loca-

tions with each other within the same phrase.

Response Sheet

Subjects were presented with a response sheet containing the following three categories: acceptable, somewhat acceptable, and not acceptable. The subject was asked to evaluate each of the taperecorded phrase's degree of acceptability by marking his response within only one of the three categories. Because previous attempts (Greenfield & Fishman,1968; Rubin,1968), at eliciting evaluative responses about language usage from subjects vis-a-vis response sheets have generally presented subjects with two response categories, it was assumed that our response sheet, by presenting the degree of acceptability as a continuum, would record variance that would otherwise be lost by using two response categories.

Subjects

The subjects included in the study were a group of undergraduate Chicano students attending a university in Southwest Texas. An equal number of males (n=10) and females (n=10) were used in the study.

Procedure

Four groups were tested, each group with five subjects. The testing was conducted in a relatively sound-proof room. The room was equipped with carrels along each of the four walls; and each carrel was partitioned off by side panels. In this manner, subjects would not be within eye-contact of each other. This precaution was taken because when a similar test was administered earlier to a group of Chicano students in an undergraduate seminar at Stanford,,it was noticed that the students would look at other students' faces for general facial responses to the

phrases. For instance, general laughter, twist of the eyebrows, etc., was interpreted as indicting something wrong with the phrase, and thus, making the phrase more probable of being labelled as "unacceptable".

The researcher, as a way of making subjects feel comfortable with the setting, explained the general purpose of the study, and briefly asked them to comment on general language usage in that particular geographical area. Once it was determined that the subjects were at ease, examples of code-switching phrases were presented. They were presented in order to acquaint the subject with (1) the categories on the response sheet, and (2) what he was going to hear on the tape. It was emphasized that there was neither a <u>right</u> nor <u>wrong</u> response. Finally, subjects were asked to listen to the set of sentences, and then decide how <u>each</u> of the sentences sounded. It was suggested that if the subject had any problems in reaching a decision, he should ask himself the following questions: would I use either of these sentences when speaking? have I heard anyone saying these sentences.

<u>Language Use</u>

An instrument was constructed which required the subject to choose from three alternatives - Spanish, English, Both (an equal amount of Spanish and English) - the code he used <u>most often</u> when speaking with a <u>particular individual</u>. Following the suggestions proposed by Barker (1947), Oliver (1972), and Skrabanek (1970), that among Chicanos, Spanish is the language of personal, intimate relations (i.e. home), and that English is the language of status and formal relations (i.e. school), it was expected that:

(1) Spanish would be the code used most often by subjects when the particular individual was: Father, Mother, Grandparents,

Sweetheart. In addition it was expected that females, when compared with males, would use Spanish most often.

(2) English would be the code used most often by subjects when the particular individual was: Friends at school, Teacher. It was also expected that females would use English most often when compared with males.

In addition, Barker (1947), Patella & Kuvlesky (1973), and Timm (1975), describe communication among Chicanos in informal relations (i.e. among siblings at home), as characterized by shifting from English to Spanish or vice-versa, and mixing of both English and Spanish. Thus, we expected:

(3) Both would be the code used most often by subjects when the particular individual was: Brothers & Sisters, Friends outside of school. Again females were expected to select Both most often than males.

Results: Code Selection

Table 1 about here

Table 2 about here

Table 1 shows the percent of subjects who for each of four individual situations (Father, Mother, Grandparents, Sweetheart), selected the hypothesized code. Where the particular individual was "Sweetheart", the hypothesized code (Spanish) was selected by only 5% of the subjects. In the remaining cases, however, the hypothesized code was selected by at

least 55% of the subjects.

Table 2 summarizes our subjects' code selection by sex for each of four individual situations. There appear to be no significant differences between males and females in their selection of the hypothesized code (Spanish).

Table 3 about here

Table 3 summarizes our subjects' code selection by sex for each of two individual situations. There does appear to be a slight difference between males and females in their selection of the hypothesized code, English.

From Table 1 one may observe the percent of subjects who for each of these two individual situations selected the hypothesized code. Where the particular individual was "friends at school", the hypothesized code, English, was selected by only 40% of the subjects. In the remaining situation, the hypothesized code was selected by 70% of the subjects.

Table 4 about here

Table 4 summarizes our subjects' code selection by sex for each of two individual situations. There does appear to be a slight difference between males and females in their selection of the hypothesized code, Both. In addition, this difference is opposite the predicted direction such a difference would assume.

From Table 1 one may observe the percent of subjects who for each

of these two individual situations selected the hypothesized code. Where the particular individual was "Brothers & Sisters", the hypothesized code was selected by only 35% of the subjects. In the remaining situation, the hypothesized code was selected by 60% of the subjects.

Results: Responses to Code-Switching Phrases

Table 5 about here

Table 5 summarizes subjects' responses to phrases containing the relative pronoun "que". Phrases in which the switch occured before the pronoun (30a-13), are shown to be slightly more acceptable than those in which the switch occured after the pronoun (6a-10).

Table 6 about here

Table 6 summarizes subjects' responses to phrases in which the switch occured between the article and noun. Phrases in which the switch occured between the article and noun (7a+29b+20b-31), are shown to be more acceptable than those in which the switch did not occur (7b+29a+20a-23).

Table 7 about here

Table 7 summarizes subjects' responses to phrases in which the switch occured between the possessive and noun. Phrases in which the switch occured between the possessive and noun (9a+33a-36), are shown

to be more acceptable than those in which the switch did not occur (9b+33b-6).

Table 8 about here

Table 8 summarizes subjects' responses to phrases in which the adjective was switched and placed in post-noun position. Phrases in which the switch occured (15a+38a-26), are shown to be more acceptable than those in which the switch did not occur in post-noun position (15b+38b-3).

Discussion

Code Selection. Our expectations regarding the selection of code, given a particular individual, were for the most part confirmed. However, there were some exceptions (e.g. those where the hypothesized code was selected by less than 50% of our subjects). These are briefly discussed below.

The exception in Table 2 occurs when the particular individual presented was "sweetheart". One possible explanation for its occurrence may be due to the ambiguity surrounding the question. Perhaps the question would not have been ambiguous were it phrased as ,"What language do you use most often when talking with your sweetheart in private?", or as, "What language do you use most often when talking with your sweetheart in public?". One would expect Spanish to be the choice for the former, and English for the latter.

The exception in Table 3 occurs when the particular individual given was "friends at school". (Total for this item from Table 1 is 40%).

There may be two possible explanations for this: (1) the question may also have been ambiguous. For example, where (i.e. coffee-shop, in the hallway) with friends at school? With female friends at school, or with male friends, or both? (2) The subjects may not consider the university to be an English-speaking setting. However, since the student body at this particular university is 85%-88% Chicano, one would expect this to operate on the Chicano's language usage on campus.

The exception in Table 4 occurs when the particular individual presented was "brothers & sisters". (Total for this item from Table 1 is 35%). We know close to nothing about the role the Chicano college student plays within his familial interactions. We do not know what expectations the family holds for him, nor what he expects from his family in return. In light of this, we will not attempt to present an explanation for this exception. (However, it is hoped that later work dealing with sociolinguistic interactions within the Chicano family will be able to clarify this and other issues.)

The expectation that sex differences in code selection would be observed was not realized. In general, Tables 2,3, and 4, demonstrate that there are no major differences in the selection of code by sex. Where others (Patella & Kuvlesky,1973) have observed females to be more frequent users of Spanish than males, our data failed to reveal this. However, this might be due to the peculiarity of our sample. Where they used high school students as their sample population, our sample population consisted of college undergraduates. Therefore, college, or increased age, may be having an equalizing effect in any differences that might arise in code selection due to sex.

One pattern that does emerge is the following: as the age differential between the particular individual and subject increases, so does the selection of Spanish as the code used. However, we are not able to state whether this pattern is due to the effects of the age differential, or whether the usage of Spanish is an act of deference to the other person's age.

The effects of these two variables, sex and age, on language usage should be investigated further. Their effects should also be compared with those of urban vs rural social origin, socioeconomic class, level of education, etc., of speakers, in order to uncover any patterns among these variables, or any concomitant effects they may have upon language usage.

Finally, the instrument used to measure language choice, or code selection, does not tell us anything regarding the code-switching of these individuals in the course of everyday life. We cannot assume that the category "Both" was interpreted by the subjects as meaning "code-switching". This is a limitation that further work with the instrument will attempt to correct. Secondly, our questions, as pointed out above, need to be cleared of all ambiguity in meaning, perhaps by placing the given individual within a series of social situations, and then asking the subject what language he would use given this sociolinguistic situation. Testing should also be conducted on the nature of social evaluation of code-switching speaker by listener. That is: how is code-switching generally evaluated? As an indicator of low social status? Of low educational attainment? Do age, language proficiency, etc., operate as sociolinguistic variables on code-switching?

Responses to (SC). Our expectations regarding the acceptability evaluation of (SC)'s by our subjects were clearly confirmed. It appears that these preliminary findings do lend support to the notion that syntactic constraints do operate on code-switching. In addition, and this being the central concern of this study, these findings also suggest that bilinguals may be able to recognize acceptable and non-acceptable forms of code-switching. It thus appears that not only may there be a grammar for code-switching, but also, the presence of a cognitive framework among speakers for evaluating the proper dimensions of this grammar.

However, while our findings may lend support to our expectations, the method employed in this study prevents us from being able to make clear connections between the speaker's evaluation of the (SC), and the (SC)'s effect upon the speaker's cognitive framework. For instance, our method is unable to account for the following questions: did the subject respond to the fact of code-switching as a global property of the phrase? or, did the subject respond to the location of the switch within the phrase? and, what meaning, connotation, or implication did the subject assign to the code-switching phrase? Thus, while our method is adequate for eliciting from our subjects their acceptability evaluation (i.e. the phrase spunds ok), it is not adequate for describing what the subject is responding to, specifically, within the code-switching phrase. Consequently, the use of this method requires the assumption that the subject is responding to the (SC) within the code-switching phrase.

We are thus not in a position to make any definitive statements of the (SC)'s examined within this study. It is expected that an extensive linguistic analysis of these phrases will be able to tell us why

it is that some switches are more acceptable than others given the linguistic environment in which they occur. Some very important questions that need to be examined are: Does the language of the phrase in which the switch occurs affect its level of acceptability? How is one to determine what the principal language of a code-switching phrase is? Is it possible to speak of Spanish-to-English, or English-to-Spanish code-switching? In brief, it is not enough to describe code-switching grammar as a means for explaining code-switches; but, it must also be examined in order to account for the fact that some switches may be controlling others.

Finally, it must be stressed that our concern in this paper has been with the speakers' cognitive awareness of code-switching, and not with actual usage. What is suggested by the results presented is that Chicano bilinguals may possess a sociolinguistic competence that enables them to evaluate appropriate and non-appropriate forms of code-switching. If this is the case, then we have certainly thrown some doubt on the notion that code-switching is a random process, and the linguistic realization of the Chicano's social existence between the best of two possible worlds.

Table 1

Code Used Most Often (in percent) by Subjects With Different Individuals

Particular Individual	Code Used Most Often (N=20) English	Both	Spanish	Total
Father	20	25	55	100
Mother	05	30	65	100
Grandparents	00	10	90	100
Brothers & Sisters	50	35	15	100
Friends at School	40	55	05	100
Friends Outside School	25	60	15	100
Teachers	70	30	00	100
Sweetheart	50	45	05	100

Table 2

Percent of Subjects by Sex Selecting The
Code Most Often Used With Particular Individuals

Particular Individual	Code Used Most Often (N=20)					
	English		Both		Spanish	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Father	30	10	20	30	50	60
Mother	10	00	20	30	70	60
Grandparents	00	00	10	00	90	90
Sweetheart	40	60	60	30	00	10

Table 3

Percent of Subjects by Sex Selecting the Code they Most Often Use With Particular Individuals

	Code Used Most Often (N=20)					
	English		Both		Spanish	
Particular Individual	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Friends at School	30	50	70	40	00	10
Teacher	60	80	40	20	00	00

Table 4

Percent of Subjects by Sex Selecting the Code They Most Often Use With Particular Individuals

Code Used Most Often

(N=20)

Particular Individual	English		Both		Spanish	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Brothers & Sisters	40	60	50	20	10	20
Friends Out of School	10	40	70	50	20	10

Table 5

Summary of Subjects' Responses
(N=20) to $(SC)_1$

Sentence #		Response Category: Acceptable	Somewhat Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Total
30	a	13	7	0	20
	b	1	3	16	20
6	a	10	8	2	20
	b	10	9	1	20

Table 6

Summary of Subjects' Responses
(N=20) to $(SC)_2$

Sentence #		Response Category: Acceptable	Somewhat Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Total
2	a	4	12	4	20
	b	12	8	0	20
	c	2	10	8	20
7	a	13	0	7	20
	b	16	4	0	20
20	a	6	8	6	20
	b	14	5	1	20
29	a	1	3	16	20
	b	4	10	6	20

Table 7

Summary of Subjects' Responses (N=20) to $(SC)_3$

Sentence #		Response Category: Acceptable	Somewhat Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Total
9	a	16	4	0	20
	b	4	7	9	20
33	a	20	0	0	20
	b	2	11	7	20

Table 8

Summary of Subjects' Responses
(N=20) to $(SC)_4$

Sentence #		Response Category: Acceptable	Somewhat Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Total
15	a	9	10	1	20
	b	1	4	15	20
38	a	17	2	1	20
	b	2	9	9	20

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Appendix A

Code-Switching Phrases Tested Within Each Category Of (SC)

$(SC)_1$:

#6 a. Se me hace que I have to respect her.
b. Se me hace that I have to respect her.

#30 a. Those friends are friends que tienen chamaquitos.
b. Those friends are friends that tienen chamaquitos.

$(SC)_2$:

#2 a. Me gusta the song porque tiene muy suave rhythm.
b. Me gusta la song porque tiene muy suave rhythm.
c. Me gusta el song porque tiene muy suave rhythm.

#7 a. I gave it to the vecina.
b. I gave it to la vecina.

#20 a. This finger me duele.
b. Este finger me duele.

#29 a. Coming back to the house, abrio the door el Henry.
b. Coming back to the house, abrio la door el Henry.

$(SC)_3$:

#9 a. Damé tu raincoat, it's raining outside.
b. Damé your raincoat, it's raining outside.

#33 a. ¿No te vas a poner tu jacket?
b. ¿No te vas a poner your jacket?

$(SC)_4$:

#15 a. They had a little Chevy convertible nuevo.
b. They had a little nuevo Chevy convertible.

#38 a. Tengo un magazine nuevo.
b. Tengo un nuevo magazine.